



RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

One Corliss Park

Providence, RI 02908

MEETING MINUTES

Date: October 5, 2010

Time: 6:00PM

Minutes recorded by: Nancy Sousa

Minutes approved on:

Interpreters: Carol Fay and Maureen McEntee

Atty: Sara Rapport

Call to Order

- a. Chairperson Travis Zellner called the meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to order at 6:12 p.m. *in the Cafeteria of the RI School for the Deaf.*

Roll Call of Board of Trustees

- b. **In Attendance:** Travis Zellner, Westley Resendes, Mary Wambach, Jodi Merryman, Harvey Corson, Amy Roche, Iraida Williams (arrived late)
- c. **Excused:** Marie Lynch (attending RTTT mtg with Mary Pendergast), Angelo Garcia

Chairman Zellner noted that Director Dunsmore is out ill – not coming; asked that a communication guideline be set-up – person must be recognized before speaking.

Public Comment: Dana Janik – President of Teachers' Union: referenced letter that union wrote and forwarded to the Board; Union letter cited issues with administration re: that the Open House was unorganized, etc. Union wanted to know next steps Board will take.

Chair: Confirmed that Board is very much aware and respectful of Union concerns; acknowledged that the last 3-4 years have been a challenge – policies have not been in place; there will be communication from the Board on what appropriate steps to take.

Public Comment: Michele Florio, School Psychologist: re Student Handbook - happy to see it's in the works – concerned about safety in the school; communication needs to be expedient; behavioral team needs procedures to handle situations; safety is number one concern – we all want to work together.

Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes

August 24, 2010 – Accepted as read

September 7, 2010 – Accepted as revised (minor changes to spelling of members names)

Reports:

Chair: Update from Sally on strategic plan; Board would like to set-up routinely scheduled work session – Sally will continue to be direct contact person; arranging meetings can be accomplished through email.

Director: Not here tonight due to illness – Assistant Director will address Board.

Assistant Director(s), Corsino Delgado: re Report on Budget vote of FY11 – revised budget-come up with 1.33% reduction; with new info-bottom line not changed-projections/actual data; since Board voted on Budget – RIDEAF hired a new teacher and posted for another position which resulted in savings; we increased Professional Development from \$8000 to \$12,000. We were able to shift line items; and we were given an extension for both years; the vote remains the same- no need to revote FY11.

For FY12, we must present a budget with a 5% reduction-which is going to happen after restoration of funds (stimulus money), in addition to adding to our baseline to accommodate – $5\% = 327,000$ – if we can use Groden rental income of \$150,000 and leave a vacant position (100,000 with benefits)- rest out of operating line items. Not sure what the vacant position is, but if Groden lease does not happen, we have to move to Plan B and at that point, everything is on the table, which could mean lay-offs.

Member: in reference to budget, we need flexibility to meet bottom line; possibility of putting money from Groden into restricted account, otherwise we may have to lose three positions and it will affect operating accounts.

Discussion ensued re: the budget and how/when to vote on revised budget; throughout the year we project and update the budget; it was noted that Board needs a subcommittee. Board members concerned about the uncertainty of being able to use the money from Groden and about federal funding.

Corsino: Fee for Service money is restricted, IDEA is federal, everything on second page of budget outline is for federal accounts.

Member: Is there an update on Fee for Service money from last year?

Chair/Attorney: Not on agenda, need to save that for another meeting

Member moved to approve FY12 budget – All agree and approved.

Interim Assistant Director of Academics, Dinaz Adenwalla: Despite rough start with the move into the new building the last week of August; we have tried to find the best match for students needs and report from RIDE to identify highly qualified teachers. Title 1 students receive extra literacy support; many adjustments have to be made; things are calming down now; teachers have done a fantastic job; kids are thrilled to be here; extremely motivated to learn. Comprehensive Student Counseling (CSC)=advisory time with teachers, social workers and guidance counselors- involves comprehension study skills, homework, improve test taking – based on students needs; shared the handbook with students; also working on a homework policy. NECAP testing is starting; we've had a good start academically.

Old Business:

Sally Arsenault, RIDE: We have a date for the Strategic Plan day—Saturday, December 4th – confirmed that Heather Harker is available; will place the interpreter requests; there's a need to identify three Board members to participate who offer very different perspectives. In one day, we hope to focus on mission, identity of school, and objectives for students and strategies school wants to meet. Lots of different groups should be represented; 25 people total; considering people with many perspectives would be great; we would be paying for interpreters and the consultant.

Chair: referenced a mandate from ten years ago for the Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing- statewide coordinating council - to monitor areas to serve deaf students – is it appropriate to look at that mandate to continue this kind of vision?

Sally Arsenault, RIDE: this will be addressed separately – effective Strategic Plan is a living document-reviewed on an annual basis. Strategic Plan leads to action plans. Regarding the legislation passed ten years ago – very specific to really look at deaf education; a group met at Alton Jones Campus – out of that group came an educational mission for the state, objectives, actions plans and information for families that is unbiased. All 3 pieces were enacted – educational interpreters, a decision was made to choose a commission to keep the plan going, but some of it never really took off, e.g. Auditory Program – is a gap for State – ten years later, I'm not sure how relevant it is.

Took a break at 7:10 p.m. – back at 7:18 p.m.

Approval of Director's recommendation of Asst. Director

Chair: With Director not here, not sure how to approach this, had suggested to discuss in Executive Session; Dinaz wanted to discuss the position in Open Session. Despite concern about Director's absence, members agree to let Dinaz speak about it.

Dinaz Adenwalla: Reiterated why she chose Open Session as she has no hidden agenda; she is here for the students; and has been here for 21 years; sees how the population has changed and has helped identify students' needs every year; She wants to offer her expertise to be part of administrative team and hopes that this will allow unique opportunity to prevent a lot of misunderstanding; assured that she will not be on the negotiating team this year; will be giving 100% of support to work and effort to administrative team; she wants the Board to know that she takes initiative to moves into action.

Member: Stated that when position was offered to her previously, salary was an issue; and asked questions about supervisory and evaluating experience.

Ms. Adenwalla: Said she couldn't answer questions about salary-as that was in executive session. Supervisory skills include working with teachers and giving feedback, which she has done for years; also stated that she took a Supervisory class at Providence College.

Attorney: Dinaz has the right to insist that all discussions pertaining to her performance be in Open Session – she also has the right not to talk about what happened in closed session years ago; she can talk about the money at stake now.

Member: Apologized for asking, yet main concern about Ms. Adenwalla re: her supervisory experience-follow-up question about number of years, teachers, teacher assistants. She answered that she was the Coordinator of the Secondary Program from 1998 to the present before the Interim position.

Discussion ensued re: making a motion to make Ms. Adenwalla the Interim Assistant Director of Academics for the rest of the school year. Additional questions remain for Director regarding the appointment; Board expressed reluctance to vote without Director present to answer more questions; wondered about advertising again and the need seek applicants with more experience; and could Ms. Adenwalla continue interim appointment while we look for additional candidates.

Attorney: Clarified that the Board has limited responsibility to approve or disapprove only; if you believe the process was not improper, Board must approve or disapprove – Yes or No. Board’s role is not to act as an interview committee; Director has put forward this person; Board is entitled to review and assess but cautioned that the Board not postpone this decision – to make a judgment to stall or not decide is not legal.

Chair: The Board questions the advertising process – it was less than a month – and wonders whether a national search was done? Members have expressed concern because of history of the school and the problems we have had.

Members: Question whether to approve Interim status till next meeting or for the rest of the year.

Chair: Reminds Board that Ms. Adenwalla remains Interim – but the Board has to decide yes or no.

Personnel Administrator: The position was posted appropriately; Ms. Adenwalla applied for the permanent not Interim position

Attorney: If the Board has questions particular to the Director, Board should table decision until Director is here, but you must say yes or no; Board can’t indefinitely postpone it.

Chair: Ms. Adenwalla are you willing to wait until the next Board meeting?

Dinaz Adenwalla: The position was not posted as Interim Assistant Director; acknowledged mixed feelings about waiting and postponing again; will make a decision tomorrow.

Chair: I want to be sure everyone stands by their decision to table this.....

Member: not appropriate to call for vote at this time.

Chair: **Tabled till November 9 meeting.**

FY Budget 2012 – Members previously moved to approve FY12 budget – All agree and approved.

Review & Approval of Student Discipline Code Policy – Motion was made to accept – all agreed and passed.

Review of draft term lease w/Groden Center

Draft not yet finished. Members voiced concerns re: Groden because it is not publicly part of RI School for the Deaf; .It was decided that the draft lease would be sent to members via email before the next Board meeting on November 9th.

New Business:

October 28 Ribbon Cutting Ceremony updates

Suggested that Members email questions to Director and indicate if planning to attend.

Review and postpone Approval of Policies:

Family Involvement

Visitor's Policy

Chair noted that he had contacted the Director for clarification on whether she wanted her goals discussed in Open or Closed session – no response – can proceed to closed session.

Actions Taken via Consensus:

- **Approved Student Discipline Code Policy**
- **Proposed FY Budget 2012**

Actions Postponed:

- Groden Center term lease
- Appointment/continuation of Assistant Director position

Adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2)

- d. **MOVED Iraida Williams AND SECONDED Westley Resendes:** That the Board would adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2) at 8:16 p.m. Approved unanimously.

At this point, note taker was excused from the meeting.

- e. **MOVED Amy Donnelly Roche AND SECONDED Mary Wambach:** That the Board would return to Open Session at . Approved unanimously.

- f. **MOVED Harvey Corson AND SECONDED Jodi Merryman:** That the Board would seal the minutes of Executive Session. Approved unanimously.

Motions from Executive Session: No consensus decisions or votes taken.

II. Adjournment at 8:59

Executive Session:

Personnel re: Director's Goals

Personnel re: Director's recommendation of Asst. Director of Academics.

